

Low Iodine Diet FAQ

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WHAT IS THE THYROID GLAND?

The thyroid gland located in the neck produces thyroid hormones which help the body use energy, stay warm and keep the brain, heart, muscles, and other organs working normally.

FURTHER READING

Further details on this and other thyroid-related topics are available in the patient information section on the American Thyroid Association® website at www.thyroid.org.

OVERVIEW

To increase the effectiveness of your upcoming radioactive iodine therapy, you may be prescribed a low iodine diet. Iodine is used in the care and feeding of animals and as a stabilizer and/or safety element in food processing. Therefore, it may be found in varying amounts in all food and beverages. The highest sources (and those to be avoided) are iodized salt, grains and cereals, some breads, fish from the sea, shellfish, beef, poultry, pudding mixes, milk and milk products. Detailed recipes that follow a low iodine diet can be found on the following websites: www.checkyourneck.com (Light of Life Foundation) and www.thyca.org (ThyCa: Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association). Below are general guidelines to follow on this diet.

MENU OPTIONS

Breakfast

- Any fruit or fruit juices
- Egg Beaters
- Oatmeal with toppings – cinnamon, honey, applesauce, maple syrup, walnuts, fruit
- 1 slice toast
- Black coffee or tea

Lunch

- Vegetarian or chicken with rice soup
- Matzo crackers
- White or brown rice with vegetable plate (fresh or frozen)
- Salad – fruit or vegetable – oil and vinegar dressing
- Fruits – fresh, frozen or canned
- Black coffee or tea

Dinner

- 6 oz Roast beef, lamb, veal, pork, or turkey
- Potato – baked or broiled
- Vegetables (fresh or frozen)
- Salad – fruit or vegetable – oil and vinegar dressing
- Fruits
- Black coffee or tea

Snacks

- Fresh fruit or juice
- Dried fruits such as raisins
- Fresh raw vegetables
- Applesauce
- Unsalted nuts
- Fruit juice
- Unsalted peanut butter (great with apple slices, carrot sticks, crackers or rice cakes)
- Matzoh and other unsalted crackers
- Home-made bread and muffins

SUMMARY GUIDE

- No iodized salt
- No dairy products or foods containing dairy products
- No foods from the sea
- Limited grain products (ie noodles, pasta, pastries) – 1 slice bread, ½ cup pasta daily
- Limited amounts of beef, chicken and turkey

AVOID THE FOLLOWING FOODS

- Iodized salt
- Any vitamins or supplements that contain iodine (especially kelp and dulse)
- Milk or other dairy products including ice cream, cheese, yogurt and butter
- Seafood including fish, sushi, shellfish, kelp or seaweed
- Foods that contain the additive carrageen, agar-agar, alginate, or nori
- Commercially prepared bakery products that are made with iodate dough conditioners
- FD&C red dye #3 – this appears in maraschino cherries and occasionally as a pink/red artificial color in beverages
- Egg yolks, whole eggs and foods containing whole eggs

- Milk chocolate (due to dairy content)
- Blackstrap Molasses (unsulfured molasses is fine)
- Soy products (soy sauce, soy milk, tofu) [note: soy does not contain iodine. However, high soy ingestion has been shown to interfere with radioactive iodine uptake in animal studies.]

FOODS THAT ARE OK

- Non-iodized salt may be used as desired
- Egg whites
- Homemade bread made with non-iodized salt and oil (not soy!) instead of butter or milk or commercially-baked breads which do not contain iodate dough conditioners, dairy, or eggs
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Frozen vegetables

- Grain, cereal products and pasta without high iodine ingredients
- Canned fruit
- Natural unsalted nuts and nut butters (peanut, almond, etc)
- Sodas, beer, wine, lemonade, fruit juices
- Coffee or tea. But remember, no milk or cream and no soy-based non-dairy creamer!
- Popcorn popped in vegetable oil or air popped, with non-iodized salt
- Black pepper, fresh or dried herbs and spices, all vegetable oils
- Sugar, jam, jelly, honey maple syrup
- Matzoh crackers

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

- Avoid restaurant foods since there is no reasonable way to determine which restaurants use iodized salt.
- Consult your doctor before discontinuing any red-colored medication or any medication containing iodine (i.e., Amiodarone, expectorants, topical antiseptics).
- Avoid all herbal supplements (especially when one is not sure how much iodine they contain).

